

JOSEPH SMITH, AN IMPOSTOR.

THE

Substance of a Lecture,

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BY JOHN I. DUNLOP,

Minister of the Gospel, Maldon, Essex.

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That Joseph Smith, the pretended Prophet of the Latter-Day Saints, was a wicked and impious impostor, is evident, from the following statement respecting his history, character, and pretensions, made upon the most respectable authority, and submitted to the serious consideration of those who are in danger of being ensnared by the delusion of Mormonism—a delusion that is blasphemous in its assumption, and damnable in its tendency.

It is but necessary to advert to a few incidents, in the history of this worthless and ignorant pretender, to see him in his true colours. Joseph was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, 23d of December, 1805. When ten years of age, his parents with their family moved to Palmyra, New York, in the vicinity of which he resided for about eleven years, the latter part in the town of Manchester. He and his father lived a sort of vagrant life, with no honest employment. They had a superstitious idea of finding hidden treasures in the earth, and were chiefly known, in the neighbourhood, as “the money diggers.” Joseph was very ignorant, and almost without any education. From a boy, he appeared dull, and entirely destitute of genius. His father claimed for him a sort of second sight—a power to look into the depths of the earth, and discover where its precious treasures were hid. In Palmyra, Dec. 4th, 1833, a declaration was signed by fifty-one of the influential, respectable, and religious inhabitants of the town, of different denominations, which shews us what kind of people the Smiths were. Their respectable townsmen “Consider them destitute of that moral character which ought to entitle them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly infamous for visionary projects, spent much of their time in digging for money, which they pretended was laid in the earth.” In this way Joseph was employed, when Mr. Isaac Hale, whose daughter he afterwards married, first became acquainted with him. He was then in the employ of a set of men, who were called “money diggers,” and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see, by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat placed over his face. In this way, he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasures. Mr. Hale says that his appearance was then “that of a careless young man, and insolent to his father.” Mr. Hale's testimony, in this case, is of the utmost importance, and, as we shall have occasion to refer to him respecting Smith, it may be as well, in this case, to state, that he made his affidavit, respecting the pretended prophet, before Charles Dimon, Justice of the Peace, and also William Thompson and David Dimock, “Associate Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, in the county of Susquehanna,” certify that “they have for many years been perfectly acquainted with Isaac Hale, and that he is a man of excellent moral character, and of undoubted veracity.” An Episcopalian Minister also, who had known him, speaks of Mr. Hale in the highest terms. His testimony is therefore to be depended upon. For a time, Joseph Smith was satisfied with living on the credulous, by means of this pretended secret. He would lead them about in this manner, and declare that gold was near. In some cases, while his dupes were digging, he prevailed upon them to pay him for his share, and then left them to find the gold, as they best could.

From the age of fourteen or fifteen till that of twenty-one, when he is said to have received the golden plates at the hands of an angel, Mormon writers inform us that Joseph Smith had been the subject of great and wonderful visions. These remarkable appearances, as we shall have occasion to notice, are told in such a clumsy manner, as, at once, to discover their trickery and deception. The whole is a made up affair. But it is not only a bad thing, but it is badly done. The track of the impostor is visible in every part of the stupid story. At this time, Mormon writers are careful to speak of the piety of their pretended revelator, while Mr. Hale informs us, in his affidavit, that Joseph Smith had the appearance of a careless, ignorant, and insolent young man, and even Smith himself, in his letter, at the end of Oliver Cowdery's, acknowledges that he “fell into many vices and follies.” Surely such a person was not likely to become, as it impiously stated, the chosen servant of the Lord to reveal his will to mankind.

But to return. J. Smith, through the pretence of having discovered a silver mine, managed to become acquainted with Miss Hale. Against the consent, and unknown to her father, he eloped with her. Being in want of money to effect his object, he persuaded a man of the name of Stowel, that he had discovered a huge bar of gold in a cave, but needed help to get it, and that if he gave him the sum he then required, he would share the bar with him. The credulous man gave him the money: Smith went off with Miss Hale to a town called Manchester, and left Stowel to look for the gold himself.*

In 1833 Smith fell in with Sidney Rigdon, an apostate Baptist minister, who was then in the office of Mr. Patterson, a painter, in Pittsburgh Pa. It was in this way that Rigdon became acquainted with Mr. Spaulding's manuscript of his Historical Romance. The manuscript was lent to Mr. Patterson. Rigdon, as he himself frequently stated, copied it. Smith and Rigdon manufactured the novel into the Book of Mormon, and palmed it, upon their credulous followers, as a revelation from God. This accounts for the clumsy story of the golden plates—the angel's visits—the reformed Egyptian characters—and an ancient race of Jews being turned into American Indians, on account of their wickedness—America being beyond the power of the judgment of God, and all the rest of it. These ignorant impostors were not capable of inventing a pretended revelation of themselves; Mr. Spaulding's manuscript was just the thing for them—they interlarded it with Scripture passages and phrases—distorted to suit their diabolical purposes—intermingled with their own hortatory effusions—and then invented the rignmarole story of the plates, to give the whole an air of antiquity and plausibility. We shall have occasion again to revert to this part of our subject. Smith terms Rigdon "the orator and oracle of the faith," and they both set up as "stewards" of "the consecrated property." Under this title they swindle a great number of people. Next they set up a "Safety Society Bank;" but were refused a charter by Government. Those who held notes became anxious to know how much precious metal was possessed by the Company. The would-be prophet prepared for their application. He filled one box with 1,000 dollars, procured 200 others of the same form, and filled them with heavy rubbish, and marked each, all round his warehouse, "1,000 Dollars." The one with the dollars was taken down, and easily opened when his creditors applied. The trick served for a time. The "elders" and "priests" took in many thousands of dollars for their paper notes, but at last the Bank exploded. They charged their "prophet" and his companions with cheating them. Smith took to flight, and, pursued by the officers of justice, escaped across the boundary, as an outlaw.* In an American publication, "The Antidote," under the head of "Bankruptcy of the Mormon Impostors," we find the following:—"This vile scheme has at last exploded! Smith, the grand con-coctor of the fraud, having applied to the Insolvent Debtors's Court (in America), to be released from liabilities, amounting to 100,000 dollars!" And, in the testimony of Mr. Bennet, who was Mayor of Nauvoo, he is declared "a bankrupt, adulterer, seducer, drunkard, and deceiver." A likely person to be chosen a prophet of the Lord! or, to commit the care of the golden plates to!

We next find Joseph Smith, the pretended "prophet," in 1835, at the head of the "Army of Zion," a band of 250 men. He was armed with "a sword, rifle, and brace of pistols; and, provided with a bull-dog and four horses," sought to propagate the faith. The authorities of the country proclaimed them "in open and avowed defiance of the laws, and as having made war upon the people of the State." Generals Lucas and Clerk were sent against them, and took thirty prisoners, amongst whom was Joseph Smith. They were lodged in the Richmond gaol, "on the charges of treason against the state, murder, burglary, and larceny."† Smith and six others escaped from prison to the State of Illinois. He then proclaimed his inspiration by God, and, under his directions, his followers built the temple of Nauvoo, on the banks of the Upper Mississippi. Here he gathered great numbers from England and other parts. He gave them, in his "prophecies," glorious anticipations of the felicity of their city, and splendour of their temple, which were all doomed to be disappointed, for the multitudes who crowded there were nearly starved, and since then the city has become almost deserted, and the temple, it is reported, was sold for a mill! Now they are trying their fortunes at a far distant place, named by them Deseret, which, by their interpretation, according to the Book of Mormon, "is a honey bee," where they appear to have forgotten Nauvoo, and the prophecies of its greatness and their glory. Mormonism has in it many things pleasing to the natural mind. It is adapted to answer the purpose of deception among the thoughtless and unwary. Its material God—promised land of gold—and licentious liberty—tickles the itching ear, soothes the discontented breast, and charms the poor dupe, as it drags him from home and happiness, from truth and peace, from the God of the Bible and his Christ. Let families emigrate, if they will, from a country like this, too densely populated, but let the people of Maldon beware of Mormon emigration. Let them not emigrate from their religion, their Bible, and their God. If they do, depend upon it, they will have cause to bitterly regret it. If they must leave the land of their nativity, let it be with their Bibles in their bosom, where they can have a Christian education for their children, and a Gospel

* See *Mormonism Pourtrayed*, by William Harris. Published at Warsaw, Illinois.

† "Gleanings by the Way," by the Rev. J. A. Clark, D.D. Philadelphia, 1842.

‡ Congressional Documents, 1841.

ministry, which may guide them into the paths of peace, holiness, and happiness. Mormon preachers and writers make up a pitiful tale about the persecutions and cruelties inflicted on Latter-day Saints, in America—that blessed country—in their estimation. The governors of the United States, in their account, are nothing better than so many butchers and murderers. And those too, who call themselves Christians, according to the pretended “Apostles” and “elders,” grasp the sword and firearms, and deadly weapons, to kill the Saints, and drive them from the face of civilized society. Joseph Smith, we are gravely told, was imprisoned thirty-nine times, for his goodness and zeal! A pretty story truly! Is it come to such a pass, that America, the boasted land of freedom, where all religions are placed upon the same level, and no man persecuted on account of his opinions, with all the advantages of a Republican Government and civilization, has so far forgotten herself? Far be it from Brother Jonathan to do after this manner. No; it is a libel on the country—trumped up to screen the wickedness of Joe Smith and his followers. As to the Latter-day Saints being driven from civilized society, it is their own leaders that have led them away, under pretence of a command from God, to go to the promised land, and when they have arrived there many of them have been compelled to starve, and the remainder to crave assistance from the Government, and from those whom they denounce as their persecutors. This was the case at Nauvoo. Other sects never drove them away, they ran away themselves, guided by the dreams and whims of their self-styled prophets.

While at Nauvoo the following convenient prophecies proceeded from Joseph Smith:—“It is meet my servant, Joseph Smith, should have a house built, in which to live and translate.” “If ye desire the mysteries of my kingdom provide for Joseph Smith, food and raiment and whatever thing he needeth.” Again, “it is meet that my servant, Sidney Rigdon, should live as seemeth him good, inasmuch as he keepeth my commandments.”* It would be very convenient for many of us to receive revelations about building houses, and getting whatever we need, if people would believe and act upon them. The prophecy respecting Rigdon is, perhaps, unequalled in the annals of history. We find the impostor, Mahomet, on one occasion, taking Zaina, the wife of one of his slaves, to himself, and no sooner was he reproved by his disciples for doing so, than he pretended to receive a revelation from God, informing him that Zaina was given to him by the will of Heaven, and that he ought to have married her before. But Mahomet is certainly outdone by S. Rigdon, who has been informed, as Smith pretends, by a revelation from God, that he may do anything he pleases. Smith then taught that “the blessings of Jacob were granted him,” and consequently he had divine authority for indulging in polygamy. And he induced several American and English women, whose husbands or fathers had been sent out on distant missions, to become his spiritual wives, or “ladies of the white veil.” But, on attempting to add the daughter of Sidney Rigdon to their number, Rigdon broke with him, dissolved all connexion with him, and exposed him in the public newspapers as “one polluted mass of corruption, iniquity, and fraud; a beast and false prophet.” An instance of the teaching and example of this profligate impostor came under the writer’s own notice, at Cheltenham, in the spring of 1849. The thing was notorious, and went the round of the public papers. At a coroner’s inquest, before Mr. Mayer, on the body of a new-born child, the illegitimate offspring of Sarah Holder, a single woman, belonging to the sect called Latter-day Saints: “Sister Holder is twenty-two years of age; at the preaching of Priest Baylis, who is fifty years of age, she joined the Mormonites. He prevailed on her to live with him. On the 15th instant (March) she was delivered of a child by the assistance of Baylis. A week after Mr. Preston went to the house, which is in Tewksbury-road, and saw the woman. She said she was delivered by the power of the Almighty, and the laying on of holy hands. He sent for Mr. Hambridge, of the police. Baylis then came in, and said he stood there on behalf of the Lord God of Heaven—that Sister Holder had had a billious attack, and he delivered her by laying on of holy hands. When in custody they said they did not consider they were doing wrong in living together. Baylis had a wife and several children. He said “Sister Holder was raised up to be a helper to him in spiritual and temporal things.”† With reference to these awful exhibitions of the working of Mormonism, we are told by them of the sins of Noah, Moses, David, &c., with a view to shew that the objection lies equally against the characters of the Bible and other Christians. It is common for Mormonites to try and turn the arguments, brought against their faith, against Christianity and the Bible. They appear to do it with peculiar delight, and exult in that, which, as they think, undermines the Bible, or brings it to the same level as the Mormon forgery. But though, alas! a Christian may fall, the above cases are brought forward to shew that the Mormonites plead for the lawfulness of such doings. The Christian does not, like the Mormonite, charge his sin upon God. He does not pretend a revelation from Heaven, authorising his wickedness. Read the 51st Psalm. It shews the feelings and views of a child of God who has fallen into sin, when convinced of his condition. How different the conduct of Smith and Baylis—the pretended prophet and priest of the Mormonites.

In 1841, Joseph Smith prophecied that his enemy, the ex-Governor of Missouri, should die within a year. Mr. Bennet, the Mayor of Nauvoo, affirms that Smith offered a reward of 500 dollars to several of the “Danite Band” to “fulfil the prophecy.” The “Danites” were a desperate band,

* “Millennial Star,” p. 49. Book of Covenants, p. 214.

† See Rev. F. B. Ashley on “Mormonism,” p. 9; and also the “Weekly Dispatch,” April 1st, 1849, p. 20th.

who undertook dangerous services for "the cause." One was found willing for the work, and after being absent two months returned. The next day the fulfilment of the prophecy was proclaimed, and "the assassin, who had previously been miserably poor, now appeared in the streets of Nauvoo with his pockets full of money." The Governor of Missouri then demanded Smith for trial, at the hands of the Governor of Illinois, on the charge of being accessory, in an attempt to murder the ex-Governor of the State of Missouri. A Mormon preacher, in attempting to evade, for he could not deny, this statement, in a lecture in Maldon lately, said that this Governor was still alive. No one said he was dead. It was only affirmed that an attempt was made to murder him, and that the cursed wretch Smith was accessory to it. So much for the Mormon defence. The Mayor of Nauvoo affirms it, and it is here stated, on the authority of the Rev. J. B. Ashley, Vicar of Wooburn, Bucks., Smith was arrested with some others, and lodged in the gaol at Carthage. While awaiting trial, they conspired against the guard; one outside shot the sentinel, while Smith and his party, who had provided themselves with arms, began firing on the guard within. In the confusion Smith endeavoured to escape by a window, and was shot, and fell on the ground a corpse.

Thus died this ignorant impostor, who proclaimed himself "a chosen servant of the Most High, and equal with the Saviour of the World"! He was an arrant deceiver, and bold blasphemer, who led a life of loathsome profligacy, cold-blooded duplicity, and sordid selfishness; and he fell without a moment to cry for mercy, while in outrageous defiance of the laws of God and man. Joseph Smith had said that God told him that he was to return, at a certain time, and get the rest of the golden plates; but, when the impostor invented this revelation, he little thought he would so soon be taken out of the world, and that, while he was doing so, he was actually proclaiming to the world himself to be—what in reality he was—a false prophet.

Joseph Smith's character, as given on the most respectable authority, is of a piece with his life and actions. He has been arraigned before the bar of his country, as a murderer—a bankrupt—an adulterer—a seducer—a drunkard—a liar—and an outlaw. He was, as Sidney Rigdon pronounced him, "one polluted mass of corruption, iniquity, and fraud." Even Martin Harris, the silly dupe of his imposition, disgusted at length with the impostor, declared him "a complete wretch." He informs us, that, on one occasion, "an American jury, of which he was one, refused the Prophet's evidence, though given under an oath," and "that from his long acquaintance with Smith, the revelator, he could not himself believe him on his oath." This testimony of Rigdon and Harris—founded on a long and intimate acquaintance with the worthless impostor—is corroborated by a distinguished professor in Illinois College, the Rev. Mr. Turner, a Presbyterian Minister. He told Joseph, to his face, that he could not view him "in any other light than that of a deliberate, cold-blooded, persevering impostor." The fifty-one of Smith's respectable townsmen, too, in their affidavits, state, "that Joseph Smith, sen., and his son Joseph, were, in particular, considered entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits."* And Isaac Hale, Smith's own father-in-law, states that he conscientiously believes, "that the Book of Mormon (so called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, with a design to dupe the credulous and unwary; and in order that its fabricators might live on the spoil of those who swallowed the deception." Surely such a man, thus recommended, by those who had the best opportunities of judging, would be the last person, in the estimation of any candid mind, to be a prophet of the Lord, as Smith pretends, and in no other light can he be viewed than that of an ignorant wicked impostor. We cannot speak a good word in his behalf. This is the pretended prophet of the Mormons!

The tale of the discovery of the golden plates is so absurd, unreasonable, and contradictory, that imposture is its chief characteristic. No person pretends to have seen the vision but Smith himself. We have only his own word for it. How far he is worthy of our credence may be seen from his life and character. No one went with him, no one besides saw the place, no one witnessed the discovery. It all rests on Smith's own assertion. He alone knew of the pretended revelation, and he is represented as keeping the matter a profound secret; yet, for all this, it is said that two ruffians waylaid him for the express purpose of taking the plates from him.† How it may be asked, did these men know that there were such plates;—that Joseph had them in his possession, at that very time;—that he was to come that way with them? These considerations at once, shew that the whole story was made up, and that its stupid inventor made a bungled affair of it. The plates, we are told, were seven by eight inches in dimensions, and put up together, made a bundle from four to six inches in breadth; with this Smith rescued himself from the two ruffians and ran away. Now, it is found, that two hundred plates, such as is described in Mormon tracts, would measure five inches: but to engrave the Book of Mormon, in the Egyptian character, on such plates, would take a thousand, make a bundle two feet in breadth, and weigh the quarter of a ton. Besides, we are informed, some of the plates were sealed. Smith kept them in reserve to play off some other piece of deception when the occasion suited, and Abigail Harris, it is well known, concealed a hundred and sixteen manuscript pages—pretended to have been translated from the plates of Lehi—these were not given in the Book of Mormon

* Professor Turner's Rise and Progress of Mormonism.

† Remarkable Visions, p. 6.

at all. These, all taken together would, probably, have made the bundle of plates, eight times the size, and, of course, the weight mentioned by the Mormons, in their writings. Joe Smith was a poor, stupid, blundering impostor, and his successors are no better. The reason why the plates were engraved in the Egyptian, and not in the Hebrew character—the language of the Jews—is because, as the Book of Mormon states, the Hebrew would take up more room than the Egyptian. The contrary is the fact. The Egyptian hieroglyphics, as used, in the days of Zedekiah, the period referred to, would occupy more space than the Hebrew. The poor ignorant impostor is caught in his own net. He thought that, if he had said that the plates were engraved in Hebrew, that there were many in America, who would very soon have discovered the cunning trickery, Smith therefore, artfully contrived the reformed Egyptian, which he thought no one would know anything about. "A few of the original characters," we are told "were accurately transcribed by Mr. Smith, which, with the translation,*" were taken to Professor Anthon, a distinguished linguist in New York. In a letter, the learned professor wrote, we read "the characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular melody I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted. Either through unskilfulness, or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects, the whole ending in a rude representation of the Mexican Zodiac." This was a specimen of Smith's reformed Egyptian! A correspondent of the Episcopal Recorder, published in Philadelphia, describes another specimen that Martin Harris shewed him. "It contained," said he, "three or four lines of characters, as unlike letters or hieroglyphics of any sort, as well could be produced, were one to shut up his eyes, and play off the most antic movements of his pen on paper." Such is a description of the reformed Egyptian, in which J. Smith tells us the plates were engraved. What are they but the scribbles of a stupid impostor, to screen his wickedness and folly? Any school boy can write the reformed Egyptian as well as Smith, the pretended Prophet. But, what tends to complete the evidence, on this part of the subject, is the fact, that Smith knew nothing whatever of the Egyptian language, although he says that the plates were engraved in it. The Rev. Henry Caswell, M.A., Professor of Divinity, Kamper College, Missouri, visited Nauvoo, for the purpose of enquiring into, and testing the pretensions of Smith. He took with him a very ancient Greek psalter, and showed it to the pretended prophet. Smith had not the sense or education to distinguish a Greek character from an Egyptian one—called Greek capitals Egyptian hieroglyphics, and the small letters that followed reformed Egyptian, like that which was written upon the plates, and mistook a Greek psalter for an Egyptian dictionary. This settles the point. Mr. Caswell's description of the self-styled prophet will for ever set at rest all questions upon the Mormons' gift of tongues—Joseph Smith's abilities—and the clumsy tale of the golden plates.

It is further evident that there were no plates. Every request to see them was refused. A gentleman, in America, offered a large sum to see them, and have them translated. He could not. It was impossible! The persons who pretend to have seen them, were all deeply concerned in the success of the imposition. Their testimony is worth nothing. Let us examine these witnesses. Oliver Cowdery is the first. Smith himself informs us, that he had a revelation from God signifying that Cowdery was not to be trusted.† The Rev. E. B. Hickman, in his "Mormonism Sifted," states that "trustworthy men, in an affidavit they signed, declare he was 'a worthless fellow, and not to be trusted or believed.'" The Mormonites themselves were obliged to expel Oliver out of their Society for immoral conduct, and he, and David Whitmer, the second witness, in a document drawn up by Sidney Rigdon, and signed by 84 Mormonites, are declared to be "united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars, and black legs of the deepest die, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the saints out of their property." David Whitmer left the Mormonites, and Joseph Smith denounced him, "as a liar and slanderer." The other Whitmers, whose names are appended to the Book of Mormon, as witnesses, no doubt, are related to this distinguished ruffian. Martin Harris, the third witness, when strictly examined, tells us very gravely that he saw the plates "with the eyes of faith, though, at the time, they were covered over with a cloth." Harris's object, as he himself acknowledged to his wife, concerning the matter was to "make money out of it," and Professor Turner declares he was a "domestic tyrant, having often beaten and kicked his patient wife."‡ But, further, Harris himself renounced Mormonism, disgusted at last with the imposture and hypocrisy of Smith, whom he declared to be a "complete wretch." Smith's own father too, acknowledged he did not see the plates with his natural eyes. On the testimony of witnesses like these, we are to believe the Book of Mormon was "translated, by the gift and power of God," from plates which had the appearance of gold. No less than six of these witnesses left the Mormon Church, thus, by their conduct proving to a demonstration, their belief, that the gold plates existed only in Smith's imagination.

The ridiculous story of Smith's spectacles, the Mormon barges, and the mode of translating the plates, is scarcely equalled in Sindbad the Sailor, and the Arabian Night's Entertainment. We are informed in the Book of Mormon, that the Jaredites needed vessels to cross the ocean, and were commanded by God to build eight barges. These barges are said to be air tight, and something of

* Remarkable Visions, p. 6.

† Smith's Revelations, Nov. 1831.

‡ Tracts on Morinonism, published by J. Glover, Leamington.

the form of ducks, with a hole at the bottom, to admit the water, and another at the top, to admit the air. They could swim above, or dive under, the water, with the same degree of ease. There was no danger of these vessels sinking, or going wrong. They had sixteen windows, two in each, which were of molten stones—touched by the finger of God, and made transparent. Two of these stones were preserved, and used by Smith for spectacles, which he called the Urim and Thummim. The cunning impostor pretended, by applying these to his eyes, to see the Egyptian hieroglyphics, on the plates, in English, although Oliver Cowdery, informs us, that God told him, that he must study it, namely the meaning of what was on the plates, in his own mind. Mormon Prophets, as doctors, differ! Mr. Hale, in his statement describes the manner, in which Smith pretended to read and interpret the plates. It was the same, as when he looked for the money diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was, at the same time, hid in the woods!! It was all the same to the impostor. While Martin Harris acted as Smith's scribe, he says that there was a thick curtain or blanket suspended between him and the pretended revelator, and that Joseph threatened him with the divine displeasure, if he attempted to look behind the screen. Harris even goes to represent Smith, as using his spectacles and interpreting the plates, although the box or ark that contained them had not as yet been opened!!! There is nothing too absurd for Mormons to believe! Alas! Poor Harris! He wished to see the golden plates, and get his hands upon them. He mortgaged his farm, to enable Smith to publish the Book of Mormon, with that prospect. He was, however, doomed to disappointment. There were no plates. After Harris, Oliver Cowdery became the scribe. He wanted to translate. Smith pretended a revelation forbidding it. Cowdery was still dissatisfied. He wanted to share the honour with Smith. Another pretended revelation came permitting Oliver to translate. The Mormon Deity is very changeable! Cowdery put on the spectacles—not a word could he decipher! Another pretended revelation comes—made up of gentle rebukes and flattering promises—for Oliver.* The ambitious scribe becomes once more the servant of Smith. This piece of trickery may be seen in the Book of Covenants. Such a stupid bare-faced forgery is seldom or ever equalled, and perhaps never excelled. It has not even the plausibility of a well written romance. To prevent further investigation about the plates, we are solemnly assured that "the angel came and took them away!" What a pity! Had the angel only left them till we would have seen and examined their pretensions, no doubt many more would have become Mormons. Moses did not act as this angel. He laid the tables of the covenant in the tabernacle. It probably was this very angel that one of the Mormon tracts informs us, came no fewer than four times in one night and morning, to the pretended prophet, telling him, over and over again, the same story.† The angel must have been very stupid, or very forgetful. Poor thing! Its memory *was* bad! It surely could not have been one of those angels, that excel in strength, that do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Oh! No! It was but the creature of Joseph Smith's imagination, and therefore, it was as stupid, and senseless as himself. A common gipsy could give us a better tale about angels than this. And to give a final touch to the imposture, the Jewish people must be slandered. When it is asked, why hide the plates at all? Why bury them? We are told that the Lemnites, a race of Jews that emigrated to America, sought to destroy them—that they were a very wicked people—and for their wickedness God changed them into American Indians. This is a bare-faced falsehood—concocted for the purpose of deception—a libel on the character of the Jewish people. Whatever Jews might be, in other respects, they never sought to destroy their Scriptures. We are deeply indebted to God's ancient people, as instruments under him, for their care and preservation of his Holy Word. This falsehood is too glaring to pass it off easily on an enlightened public.

The real origin of the Book of Mormon may be traced to the following incident, given on affidavit, by Peter Ingersol, an intimate friend of Smith's "One day Joseph Smith greeted me with a joyful countenance; upon questioning as to the cause, he replied:—'As I was passing the woods yesterday after the heavy rain, I found in a hollow, some beautiful white sand, I took off my frock and tied up several quarts of it, and went home. I found them all at dinner, and they eagerly asked the contents of my frock: at that moment, I was thinking of what I had heard of a history, found in Canada, called 'the Golden Bible;' so I gravely said 'it was the Golden Bible;' to my surprise they were credulous enough to believe it. I then told them, I had received a command to let no man see it, for says I 'no man can see it with the naked eye and live.' However, I offered to take out the book and shew it to them, but they refused to see it and left the room. Now, said Joe, I have got the damned fools fixed, and will carry out the fun."‡ And so he did carry out the fun. At this time Smith became acquainted with Sidney Rigdon, as already intimated, who had possessed himself of a copy of Mr. S. Spaulding's manuscript. The MS. claimed to have been written by one of the last nation, and to have been recovered from the earth, and assumed the title of "Manuscript found." It was an historical romance—written by Mr. S. for his own amusement, and that of his neighbours. When it was clearly ascertained that the MS. was not likely to be published, in consequence of the death of its author, Rigdon and Smith thought they would turn it to some account, and taking advantage of the foregoing incident, set about making it the ground work of their pretended revelation. As soon as the MS. was

* Book of Covenants, p. 177.

† Rem. Visions, p. 3.

‡ "Mormons," by D. Kidder, New York.

completed, Rigdon, the secret mover of the whole diabolical machinery, withdrew from the scene of action, and with others, began to preach the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, in the literal sense. He was the man, with whom this peculiarity of the Mormon system originated. To shew that this dogma was an after thought—it entered not into the head of the blundering impostor himself, nor was it at first a part of his system—Joseph Smith himself, we are informed, was baptised, of course, for the remission of his sins, six years after that he states, an angel appeared to him, and told him he was “sent by commandment, to communicate to him that his sins were forgiven.” Rigdon intended to return as soon as a favourable opportunity occurred, and, to keep up the deception, appeared as a stranger to Smith, when introduced to him, affected surprise at the Book of Mormon as something new to him; and allowed those who presented it to him to use a great deal of persuasion, and argument before he consented to read it; and then pretended to violent struggle of mind, before he acknowledged, that he believed and embraced it. What artful policy! Smith was unable to print the manuscript when it was produced. He fell in with Martin Harris, who readily became the silly dupe of the imposture. He mortgaged his farm to get money, and the first edition of the Book was published in 1830. Harris at first believed the Book to be what it pretended, and, finding himself deeply involved, he helped forward the imposition, as the best way of getting his money back again, with the promised profits. Abigail Harris, his wife, was convinced it was an imposition, and continually pressed him on the point. One day, when arguing its falseness with him, he replied, “What if it is a lie, if you will let us alone, I will make money by it.” Mrs. Harris persisted in her endeavours to expose the fraud, and in her husband’s absence took 116 MS. pages, and gave them in custody of a neighbour. When charged with it, she replied “if this be a divine communication, the same Being who revealed it to you can easily replace it.” She was convinced, that they could not possibly write it again verbatim, and intended, when they had attempted to have done so, to get the 116 MS. pages printed that they might be compared. Had it been, as they pretended—a divine communication—they could easily have restored it. Had it been Spaulding’s MS. in its original state they could have done so too;—But the MS. in its manufactured condition, they were not able to restore, word for word, nor dare they attempt it. Rigdon was in behind the screen. He saw through the plot laid for him. Harris was indignant at his wife beyond measure; he raved most violently, and, it is said, actually beat her, with a rod; but she remained firm, and would not give up the MS. What was to be done? Why Smith comes into the rescue, with a pretended revelation forbidding him to translate. A pretty way to get out of it truly! A child may see through this clumsy trick.

The Rev. Solomon Spaulding’s Historical Romance is the ground work of the Book of Mormon, and that forgery has no more right to be considered a divine revelation than the Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, or any other novel. Mrs. Davidson, the widow of Mr. Spaulding, in her statement informs us, that “After the Book of Mormon came out, a copy was taken to New Salam, the place of Mr. Spaulding’s former residence, and the very place where the ‘Manuscript Found’ was written. A woman preacher appointed a meeting there, and in the meeting read and repeated copious extracts from the Book of Mormon. The historical part was immediately recognised by all the older inhabitants as the identical work of Mr. Spaulding, in which they had all been interested years before. Mr. John Spaulding was present, and recognised perfectly the work of his brother. He was amazed and afflicted that it should have been perverted to so wicked a purpose.” After a stir had been made about it in America, the Rev. Mr. Storms, a clergyman of Holleston, in Canada, desirous of ascertaining the real truth of the matter, wrote a letter to Mrs. Spaulding, now Mrs. Davidson, for she has married again, to inquire if she knew anything concerning it. She returned an answer, stating that unquestionably the pretended revelation was printed from her husband’s copy. This is pretty decided on the matter. Mrs. Davidson’s statement was published in the Boston Recorder, in the winter of 1840, accompanied with a certificate signed by two clergymen of Monson, in the United States, the Rev. A. Ely, D.D., and Mr. Austin, Principal of Monson Academy, stating that Mrs. Davidson was a humble Christian woman, of unblemished character, whose word might be fully believed. Sidney Rigdon, in a letter dated May 29, 1839, denies Mrs. Davidson’s statement, and a man called Flanigan endeavours to invalidate her testimony. Rigdon has not one proof to bring against Mrs. Davidson’s statement, but merely his own assertion. It is for the public to judge, who is more worthy of credit—a pious lady, who has no end to serve by it but the cause of truth, or men whose interest it is to keep up the imposition.

It is evident from the above statement respecting Smith, his character, and pretensions, that he can be viewed in no other light than that of a cold-blooded, ignorant, and wicked deceiver. The person who, after an impartial investigation of the subject, still persists in maintaining the divine mission of this worthless wretch, must either be accessory, and lend a helping hand to the imposture, or, if that be not the case, he has every reason to fear, that he is given over to a strong delusion—to believe a lie. There can be no other alternative. For further information respecting the Mormon delusion—its impiety and blasphemy—the reader is directed to Doctor Sexton’s Portraiture of Mormonism, W. Strange, London. The Rev. F. B. Ashley’s work on “Mormonism,” John Hatchard, London. Mr. Ashley is a pious Evangelical minister of the Established Church, the Vicar of Wooburn, Bucks. His book should be in the hands of every member of the Church of England, who is any way annoyed with the gross delusion. The Rev. Edward B. Hickman’s Tract, “Mormonism Sifted,” Jarrold and Sons,

London. Mr. Hickman is an Independent Minister, at Boxford, Suffolk. His tract is a very valuable one, on the subject. And R. Clarke's "Mormonism Unmasked," Houlston and Stoneman, London. This tract is very important, particularly in its reference to American intelligence, on the subject. To these excellent men the writer of this, acknowledges his deep obligations—he has freely made use of their works, and refers to them, and the authorities quoted by them, for the statements he has made. Whether these men—eminent for piety and learning—men of character and probity—are worthy of more credit than Joseph Smith, and his pretended apostles, priests, and elders; it is for the candid reader to judge. If necessary a reference can be made to America—to Professors Turner and Anthon—Mr. Bennet at Nauvoo, Mrs. Davidson, Mr. Hale, Mr. Caswell, and others—for the correctness of these statements. We fear not investigation, and are prepared to prove that the whole system of Mormonism is delusive, impious, and damnable. If any in Maldon, follow their pernicious ways, he does it with his eyes open. He is faithfully warned of his danger, and, if he persists in it, he must bear the consequences. His blood will be upon his own head. We wished to have examined the Book of Mormon, and the vain pretensions of Mormons, but space would not permit it. We may, however, say that we deny *in toto* all these pretensions, and defy them to come forward and substantiate any of them. The Mormon doctrines, too, are awful in the extreme. They are a compound of Atheism and Popery—in the garb of Christianity, to deceive the unwary—so revolting in their nature, as to only require to be mentioned, to shew their dangerous and fatal tendency. Mormons tell us that we worship "a newly invented God, resembling nothing in heaven, or earth, or in hell." That "he is an imaginary God," and our worship of him "far surpasses in absurdity the worship of frightful serpents, images of wood, stone, or brass," and that we are "modern idolators," because from the Word of God, we maintain God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. If our God was like any other, or any creature, he would be, as they state, the invention of our imagination, and an idol; for there is none like God. But "the true God," of the Mormons, we are informed "has a form, dimensions, and a body as well as a man; he can eat and drink as well as a man; a man resembles him in the features and form of his body, and he does not differ materially in size." "The substance of his person cannot be in two places, at the same instant, it also requires time for him to move from place to place!"* It is stated, in the Book of Mormon, that "Christ" appeared to the Jaredites and said "I am the Father and the Son"—thus confounding the persons of the Godhead, and representing the Father and Son, as one and the same person. We are again told that "the Holy Spirit is a material substance—is omnipresent—extends through all space." The same writer says, in another place "if a substance be infinitely extended it ceases to be a person," and again, that "an omnipresent person is impossible."† Thus the doctrine of the Ever-Blessed Trinity is frittered away, with their contradictory and absurd statements. The Mormon notion of God, and the Trinity is an unnatural compound of ancient Atheism and Swedenborgianism—the absurd philosophy of the one, and fanatical nonsense of the other. The material God of the Mormons is altogether "such an one as themselves,"—indeed Mormonites have said he knows nothing unless an angel goes to tell him! Oh! the shocking impiety! The fearful blasphemy! Mormons also tell us that matter is eternal—that it was not created as the Word of God informs us. This is an old doctrine of Atheists—opposed alike, to reason, science, and revelation. "If there were an eternal nature besides an eternal God," says the celebrated Dr. Adam Clarke, "there must have been two self-existent, independent, and eternal beings, which is a most palpable contradiction." Mormons say that baptism "is absolutely necessary to salvation," or, in other words, that a sinner—though "believing and repentant"—cannot be saved without it. When told that the thief on the cross was saved without, and that Simon Magus was not saved with it, a Mormon writer endeavours to make it appear that the penitent thief went to hell! This is Mormonism with a vengeance! Though Mormons do not admit of salvation without immersion, yet, wonderful to say, they "do not believe it right to interfere with bond servants" that is, in plain English, slaves, "neither preach the gospel to, nor baptize them, contrary to the will and wish of their masters."‡ Poor slaves may go to eternal perdition, for all the Mormons care, just because they are slaves! But this is not all, Mormon priests, and elders pretend to wash souls out of hell and remove them to heaven by immersing some one who is willing to undergo the process in their stead. This out does Rome entirely,—they purchase souls by masses out of purgatory, but Mormons wash them out of hell! Shocking! They call this baptism for the dead. To dwell further upon these impious statements, unscriptural dogmas, and dreadful doctrines is quite unnecessary. They must horrify every Christian, and lead him to pray that God would in his mercy give those who advocate them, repentance to the acknowledging the truth, which he has revealed in his own word!

* The Kingdom of God, part I.

† Pratt's Tracts.

‡ Book of Covenants, p. 133.